

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 NEAE-00 SSM-03 SSO-00 NSCE-00
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TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2553
INFO SIT-REP COLLECTIVE PRIORITY 186
USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER
USNMR SHAPE BELGIUM
CINCUSNAVEUR, LONDON ENG
CINCUSAFE RAMSTEIN AB GER
CIA WASHDC
COMSIXTHFLT
COMPHIBRON SIX
COM THREE FOUR MAU
CTF SIX ZERO
CTF SIX ONE
CTF SIX TWO
CTG SIX ZERO PT TWO
FICEURLANT NORFOLK VA
FOSIF ROTA SPAIN
DIA WASHDC
CINCUSAREUR HEIDELBERG GER
USDOCOSOUTH NAPLES IT

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 8917

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MILI, PINS, PINT, LE
SUBJECT: LEBANESE SITUATION DECEMBER 16-17

REF: BEIRUT 8875 (DTG 151522Z DEC 76)
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1. SUMMARY. QUADRIpartite COMMITTEE HAS BEEN MEETING
WITH PALESTINIAN LEADER ARAFAT TO IRON OUT DIFFERENCES
ON QUESTION OF HEAVY ARMS COLLECTION, BUT DECISION AGAIN
POSTPONED. CLASHES OCCURRED DEC 16 BETWEEN SAIQA AND
REJECTION FRONT ELEMENTS IN BURG AL BARAJINAH REFUGEE

CAMP. SYRIAN ELEMENTS OF ASF OCCUPIED SEVERAL PRO-IRAQI NEWSPAPER OFFICES DEC 15, WHILE OTHER PAPERS THREATENED AGAINST PRINTING ANTI-SYRIAN NEWS. PALESTINIAN LIBERATION ARMY SOLDIERS REFUSED ENTRY INTO LEBANON AT BEIRUT AIRPORT. COUNCIL OF MINISTERS CONCENTRATING ON RECONSTRUCTION EFFORTS PRIOR TO POLICY STATEMENT PRESENTATION TO PARLIAMENT DEC 23. THOUGH FIRST SHIP ARRIVED AT BEIRUT PORT DEC 15, PORT CAPABLE OF ONLY MINIMAL FUNCTIONS. DEFENSE MIN BOUTROS DISCUSSING REORGANIZATION OF LEBANESE ARMY. GAMBLING CASINOS, RACE COURSE, MORE THEATERS OPENING IN BEIRUT. BUS SERVICES RESUMED DEC 16. END SUMMARY.

2. QUADRIpartite COMMITTEE MEETINGS. AMBASSADORS OF KUWAIT, SAUDI ARABIA, AND EGYPT, ACTING IN THEIR CAPACITIES AS QUADRIpartite COMMITTEE MEMBERS, MET DEC 15 WITH YASIR ARAFAT. (SYRIAN REP AL-KHOLY WAS NOT PRESENT, AND SOME PAPERS SAID HE WAS IN DAMASCUS, WHILE OTHERS REPORTED HIM MEETING RIGHTIST LEADERS.) FULL COMMITTEE MET DEC 16, ONCE WITH ARAFAT AND TWICE WITH PRESIDENT SARKIS. ANTICIPATED DECISION ON ARMS COLLECTION POSTPONED, AND L'ORIENT-LE JOUR REPORTS FOLLOWING STUMBLING BLOCKS CONCERNING PALESTINIANS AND IN PARTICULAR REJECTIONIST FRONT:

A. MAINTENANCE OF ORDER IN CAMPS TO INSURE ONLY LIGHT ARMS PRESENT, WHICH COMMITTEE DESIRES SHOULD BE RESPONSIBILITY OF ONE OR MAXIMUM OF TWO ORGANIZATIONS (FIRST SAIQA, THEN FATAH);

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B. DETERMINATION OF WHAT CALIBER OF MORTARS AND ROCKETS PALESTINIANS WILL BE PERMITTED IN SOUTH LEBANON; AND

C. CORRECTION OF WEAPONS INVENTORY PROVIDED ASF BY PALESTINIANS, WHICH COMMITTEE BELIEVES REPRESENTS ONLY 15-20 PERCENT OF TRUE STRENGTH.

3. AS SAFIR REPORTS ARMS COLLECTION WILL BE LIMITED TO AREAS NOW OCCUPIED BY ASF, THUS EXCLUDING THE SOUTH. PALESTINIANS, ACCORDING TO L'ORIENT-LE JOUR, HAVE ALREADY TRANSPORTED BULK OF THEIR HEAVY WEAPONS TO THE SOUTH AND WILL DEPOSIT REMAINDER IN AREAS DESIGNATED BY THE COMMITTEE. RIGHTISTS, THE PAPER CONTINUED, HAVE ASSEMBLED THEIR HEAVY WEAPONS IN MOUNTAIN AREAS IN PREPARATION FOR TURNOVER TO ASF. ARAFAT, WHO REQUESTED COMMITTEE POSTPONE ANY DECISION UNTIL DEC 22, DEPARTED BEIRUT DEC 16 FOR DAMASCUS, WHERE HE IMMEDIATELY MET WITH PRESIDENT ASAD. PRESS SAYS ARAFAT WILL PROCEED TO TRIPOLI (LIBYA), CAIRO,

AND RIYADH FROM DAMASCUS.

4. REJECTION FRONT-SAIQA CLASHES. MIL SOURCES AND PRESS INDICATE SYRIAN-BACKED SAIQA IS CONTINUING TO CLASH WITH REJECTIONISTS. FIGHTING BROKE OUT EVENING OF DEC 16 IN BURJ AL BARAJINAH REFUGEE CAMP SOUTH OF BEIRUT. AFTER SHOOTING STOPPED IN BURJ AL BARAJINAH, SOME FIGHTING BEGAN IN SABRA AND SHATILLA CAMPS. LOCAL SYRIAN ASF ELEMENTS MOBILIZED TO CONTAIN SHOOTING, WHICH INCLUDED MORTARS AND B-7 ROCKETS, BUT ASF DID NOT ENTER CAMPS OR BECOME INVOLVED IN FIGHTING WHICH LASTED SEVERAL HOURS. SAIQA ACCUSED REJECTION FRONT OF ATTACKING ITS OFFICES IN ATTEMPT TO REPEAT NAHR AL-BARED INCIDENT, BUT REJECTIONIST SAY SAIQA ELEMENTS OPENED FIRE ON PFLP CENTER FIRST. EXTENT OF DAMAGES AND CASUALTIES RESULTING FROM INCIDENTS NOT KNOWN, BUT SITUATION MORNING OF DEC 17 QUIET.

5. STRONG-ARM TACTICS AGAINST PRO-IRAQI NEWSPAPER
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OFFICES. THE DAY BEFORE CLASHES IN CAMPS, ELEMENTS OF ASF (PRESEMAPBLY SYRIAN) OCCUPIED OFFICES OF PRO-IRAQI DAILIES AL MOHARRIR AND "BEIRUT" AND PRO-IRAQI WEEKLY AL DASTOUR. ACCORDING TO L'ORIENT-LE JOUR, PRESIDENT SARKIS RAISED MATTER WITH LEBANESE ASF COORDINATOR COL AL-HAJJ. SYRIAN REP IN QUADRIPARTITE COMMITTEE, COL MOHAMMED AL-KHOLY, DENIED SYRIAN INVOLVEMENT, BUT ACCORDING TO AS SAFIR, HE ALSO CIRTICIZED "MALICIOUS NEWS" BEING CIRCULATED IN BIEURT ABOUT SYRIAN ASF TROOPS. EMBASSY SOURCES REPORT THAT INDEPENDENTS AN NAHAR AND L'ORIENT-LE JOUR HAVE BEEN DISCREETLY THREATENED SHOULD THEY PRINT NEWS CRITICAL OF SYRIA. IT UNCLER WHETHER ACTION AGAINST PRESS WITH OR WITHOUT APPROVAL OR PRIOR KNOWLEDGE OF PRESIDENT SARKIS, AND MAY OPEN TO QUESTION AUTHENTICITY OF HIS CONTROL OF ASF. BOTH EDDE AND JUNBLATT CAPITALIZING ON SITUATION.

6. PALESTINIANS REFUSED ENTRY AT AIRPORT. EMBASSY SOURCES AND PRESS INDICATE THAT APPROXIMATELY 100 SOLDIERS OF PALESTINIAN LIBERATION ARMY LANDED AT BEIRUT AIRPORT ON DEC 15. IN FIRST INDICATION PRESIDENT SARKIS WOULD DEAL STERNLY WITH SUCH MATTERS, HE ALERTED ASF AND ORDERED SURETE GENERAL NOT TO ALLOW PALESTINIANS TO DISEMBARK. PALESTINIANS THEN RETURNED TO CAIRO ON SAME PLANE.

7. CABINET ACTIVITIES. COUNCIL OF MINISTERS APPROVED CABINET POLICY STATEMENT DEC 15, WHICH TO BE DEBATED IN PARLIAMENT DEC 23, AFTER WHICH VOTE OF CONFIDENCE EXPECTED. IN THE MEANTIME, CABINET FORMED THREE RECONSTRUCTION COMMITTEES: 1) COMMITTEE RESPONSIBLE FOR REPAIRING AND

RE-EQUIPING PUBLIC SERVICE BUILDINGS AND OFFICIAL INSTITUTIONS;
2) COMMITTEE FOR RECEIVING AND DISTRIBUTING FOREIGN
AID; AND 3) COMMITTEE TO COMPLETE BY THE NEXT CABINET MEETING
PLAN FOR RECONSTRUCTION OF HOUSING AREAS. COUNCIL ALSO
INSTRUCTED AMINE BIZRI, MIN OF PUBLIC WORKS, TO PREPARE
SURVEY OF DAMAGED MARKET AREAS. PRIME MINISTER AL-HUSS
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HAS POSTPONED HIS DEPARTURE TO SAUDI ARABIA AND KUWAIT UNTIL
DECEMBER 18 AND IS NOW SCHEDULED TO VISIT DAMASCUS DEC 17,
PROBABLY TO DISCUSS HEAVY WEAPONS AND PRESS CONTROLS.

8. PORT REOPENS, BARELY. A SMALL LEBANESE FREIGHTER, "THE
OMAR," ARRIVED IN BEIRUT DEC 15. PRESS HAILED EVENT AS
MARKING OFFICIAL OPENING OF PORT. IN FACT, PORT IS NOT
YET CAPABLE OF MORE THAN TOKEN FUNCTIONS. DATT SAW FOUR
SUNKEN SHIPS IN INNER HARBOR, NOTED THAT CRANES AND OTHER
CARGO-HANDLING EQUIPMENT NOT OPERATIONAL AND THAT NONE OF
DEBRIS FROM DESTROYED WAREHOUSES HAD BEEN REMOVED. AS
SAFIR REPORTS ABOUT TWENTY ARMED PHALANGISTS DISRUPTED
ACTIVITIES IN THE PORT DEC 16, WHEN THEY STARTED QUESTIONING
AND ROUGHING UP LABORERS. ASF REPORTEDLY ARRESTED THREE
MEN INVOLVED IN INCIDENT.

9. REORGANIZATION OF LEBANESE ARMY. DEFENSE MINISTER,
FUAD BOUTROS AND PIERRE GEMAYEL MET DEC 16 TO DISCUSS
ARMY REORGANIZATION. GEMAYEL TOLD PRESS AFTERWARDS THAT
NO FORCE--NOT EVEN ASF--CAN TRULY REPLACE LEBANESE NATIONAL
ARMY. ACCORDING TO MISSION SOURCES, THERE HAS BEEN
OPPOSITION, PARTICULARLY FROM CAMILLE CHAMOUN, TO NAMING
GABY LAHOUD AS COMMANDER OF ARMY, AND NUMBER OF OTHER CAN-
DIDATES HAVE RECENTLY BEEN MENTIONED.

10. SWINGING BEIRUT. GAMBLING ACTIVITY HAS BEEN RESUMED
AT CASINOR DU LIBAN, AND BEIRUT RACE COURSE ALSO PREPARING
TO REOPEN. PAPERS DEC 16 CARRIED PICTURES OF HORSES AND
JOCKEYS IN TRAINING. IN ASHRAFIYA, MUSICAL PLAY HAS OPENED.
MOVIE THEATERS HAVE BEEN OPERATING AT NIGHT IN WEST BEIRUT,
BUT THIS IS FIRST NIGHT-TIME ENTERTAINMENT REPORTED IN EAST
BEIRUT. SOME PUBLIC BUS SERVICE BEGAN DEC 16.
HOUGHTON

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